

---

A Moroccan Kabbalist in the White House: Understanding the Relationship between Jared Kushner and Moroccan Jewish Mysticism

Author(s): Aomar Boum

Source: *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Spring/Summer 2017), pp. 146-157

Published by: Indiana University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jewisocistud.22.3.07>

Accessed: 10-06-2017 18:07 UTC

## REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

[http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jewisocistud.22.3.07?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jewisocistud.22.3.07?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents)

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



Indiana University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Jewish Social Studies*

# A Moroccan Kabbalist in the White House: Understanding the Relationship between Jared Kushner and Moroccan Jewish Mysticism

Aomar Boum

**F**ew political pundits believed that Donald J. Trump would defeat a political giant like Hillary R. Clinton in the 2016 American elections. The mere image of Trump, a reality-television personality who found huge and unquestionable support among Christian evangelicals, in the White House excited derision in many liberal and conservative circles during the early days of the Republican nomination process. Like many, I had my doubts, although I also partly believed that Trump could win by riding the popular anger of many Americans, especially given his savvy populist messaging and familiarity with the television industry. Yet a number of Orthodox Jewish Moroccan informants with whom I spoke during and after the campaign never doubted that Trump would win the election. That the most significant Jewish support for Trump came from followers of the Shas Party in Israel, Chabad Lubavitch, and Orthodox and Hasidic Jews stirred my intellectual curiosity throughout both the primary and the national phases of the election. I wanted to understand why many

---

Aomar Boum, "A Moroccan Kabbalist in the White House: Understanding the Relationship between Jared Kushner and Moroccan Jewish Mysticism," *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* n.s. 22, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2017): 146–157. Copyright © 2017 The Trustees of Indiana University. doi: 10.2979/jewisocistud.22.3.07

---

Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Moroccan Jews supported Trump as a candidate.

One of my Moroccan Jewish informants, Mordachai (informants' names are pseudonyms), a member of Shuva Israel (Return Israel; see below), noted that in Ashdod and other Moroccan ultra-Orthodox communities in Jerusalem it was widely believed that a miracle would cause Trump to win.<sup>1</sup> The popular opinion was that a well-respected rebbe had predicted Hillary Clinton's defeat.<sup>2</sup> In the end, the miracle of President Trump happened, and miracle-working rabbis associated with Jared Kushner, the president's Orthodox Jewish son-in-law, wasted no time claiming that they had had something to do with it. Rabbi David Pinto<sup>3</sup> and Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto,<sup>4</sup> two descendants of a long line of North African rabbis, are thought to have been among those miracle workers.<sup>5</sup> The Pinto Torah institutions are part of a global Jewish network led by members of the Pinto family to disseminate Torah in Israel (Ashdod and Jerusalem), France (Lyon and Paris), the United States (New York and Los Angeles), and Argentina (Buenos Aires).<sup>6</sup> Another of their followers, Yosef, told me that "the election of Trump does not only mean that there will be Shabbat candles every Friday night at the White House, but that Moroccan mystic kabbalists will bless the White House from Ashdod every Shabbat."<sup>7</sup>

On November 6, 2016, two days before the election, Ivanka Trump and Kushner, her husband, visited the Ohel, the grave of Menachem Mendel Schneerson located in the Old Montefiore Cemetery in Queens.<sup>8</sup> Since the unexpected death of the Lubavitcher rebbe in 1994, his grave has been a major destination for many Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews, who come there seeking his blessing. Ivanka Trump converted to Orthodox Judaism before her marriage to Jared Kushner, and it is widely believed that she has maintained an Orthodox Jewish lifestyle since her conversion. In this short commentary essay, I reflect on the reasons that have driven Kushner, a Modern Orthodox American Jew, to seek a blessing at the Ohel without being an openly declared follower of the Lubavitch movement and its mystical version of Judaism and a believer that miracles happen through prayers mediated through a rebbe. I also discuss the larger religious context that makes it possible for a modern Jewish New Yorker like Kushner to believe in modern Jewish Orthodox theology and at the same time support Jewish mystics such as David Pinto, a descendant of Rabbi Haim Pinto of Essaouira, Morocco, in return for their blessings (see figure 1).<sup>9</sup> (I acknowledge that there is a historical tension and division among Ashkenazi and non-Ashkenazi Jews about secularism and belief in amulets and the power of tzaddiks, a clash that became obvious in the context of Israeli society.) Finally, I provide a tentative

[147]

*A Moroccan  
Kabbalist*

●  
Aomar  
Boum

theoretical argument that helps us understand the comfortable attitude of Kushner and his family toward mystical folklore, folk magic, and beliefs that have long been ridiculed by Ashkenazi Jews as a phenomenon of the poor and “primitive” Jews of the Middle East, especially in the early years of Israel.

Between the early 1950s and the late 1970s, a large population of Moroccan Jews settled in Israeli development towns, or *ayarot pituah* (many originating as *ma'abarot*, transit or refugee camps). These communities brought with them their traditional beliefs and religious customs, including kabbalist and mystical rituals. Moroccan communities were strongly attached to the *Zohar*.<sup>10</sup> Moroccan and Ashkenazi Hasidic Jews have always been the largest group of pilgrims to the shrine of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai on Mount Meron, near Safed, and during the annual commemoration of his death, known as *hilloula*. Yoram Bilu posits that the contrasting cultural traditions of Moroccan and Hasidic Ashkenazi communities and their shared mystical beliefs



Figure 1. Photograph of Rabbi Haim Pinto of Essaouira, 1940. Courtesy of the Dahan-Hirsch Collection, Brussels, Belgium.

make their gathering during the pilgrimage a Turnerian moment of “binding diversities” and “overcoming cleavages.”<sup>11</sup> Aaron Tapper argues that one dramatic transformation of Hasidism as an Ashkenazi practice is its adoption by Moroccans, creating what is known as Moroccan Hasidism. Tapper notes that “during the twentieth century a Hasidic rabbi (who was Ashkenazi) named a Moroccan Jew his successor—thus birthing a new, non-Ashkenazi lineage of Hasidism.”<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that despite their differences, North African beliefs and Hasidic hagiolatric traditions are imbricated in a complex of traditions that incorporate local and mystical teachings that Rabbi Isaac Luria preached throughout the Ottoman Empire. As a popular Jewish mystical tradition, Hasidism became one of the largest mystical movements. One of the most important aspects of both Moroccan and Hasidic Jewish traditions in terms of acceptance of religious beliefs is that they revolve around a charismatic figure. In addition, the intimate relationship with God is not only central but is the primary purpose of life.

In Israel, following years of discrimination and marginalization in politics and society, Moroccan Jews began to gain political relevance after they shifted their political allegiance and became regular voters for Likud beginning in 1977.<sup>13</sup> The founding of Shas in 1984, just before a Knesset election, was primarily a protest against meager Sephardi representation in Agudath Yisrael, which represented Orthodox Polish Jews before it became the party of Haredi Jews in Israel. Led by the Sephardi rabbi Ovadiah Yosef and also known as the Worldwide Sephardic Association of Torah Guardians, Shas was intended to be a counterweight to the Ashkenazi political and religious establishment. Shas also introduced its own government-funded network of religious schools, known as Ma’ayan Ha-hinukh Ha-torani (Wellspring of Torah Education), in 1988, to address the needs of Orthodox Israeli Sephardi families. Despite its early moderate views toward the Palestine-Israel conflict, Shas has shifted to the right not only in terms of settlements but also in its view of Zionism, which culminated with its joining the World Zionist Organization in 2010. In addition, members of the movement opted to internationalize their message, especially in the United States. In December 2011, an American affiliate group known as the American Friends of Shas was established in Brooklyn.<sup>14</sup>

Shas was able to mobilize and enlist thousands of poor and disenfranchised North African Jews for *teshuvah*, the return to strict religious practice.<sup>15</sup> Many schools and yeshivas started serving North African and Middle Eastern Israelis through governmental subsidies.

[149]

*A Moroccan  
Kabbalist*

●  
Aomar  
Boum

At the same time, intellectual and ritual exchanges began to take place between North African Shasniks and Orthodox Ashkenazis, including Hasidim. Ashkenazi Judaism in Israel began to benefit from the recruitment of Moroccan students, who were trained to adapt to European and American schools of Judaism and Zionism. It is in this context that Yoshiyahu Pinto emerged in Ashdod before moving to New York, where he fostered connections with Kushner's family.

Born in 1973, Yoshiyahu Pinto is the great-grandson of Israel Abuhatzaira<sup>16</sup> and a descendant of Haim Pinto,<sup>17</sup> making him the scion of two Moroccan rabbinic lines. Abuhatzaira, born in 1889 in Tafilalt, in southeastern Morocco, was believed to be a *ba'al mofet*, working miracles through prayer. After his death in 1984, his tomb in Netivot became one of the most important Jewish pilgrimage sites in Israel. Haim Pinto (1748–1845), also renowned for his miracles,<sup>18</sup> was a respected leader and venerated rabbinical judge in the Jewish community of the coastal city of Essaouira, where a synagogue still bears his name. Pinto's paternal descent is traceable to the sixteenth-century kabbalist Rabbi Haim Vital, a student of Isaac Luria. A four-day annual celebration of Haim Pinto, at his shrine (see figure 2), continues to attract thousands of Moroccan Jews from all over the world. Yet despite this Moroccan rabbinic heritage, Yoshiyahu Pinto veered away from Moroccan Jewish traditions and turned to Satmar Hasidism, one of the great Hungarian Hasidic sects that was all but destroyed by the Holocaust and reestablished in New York after World War II to



Figure 2. Shrine of Haim Pinto, Essaouira, Morocco, 2014. Photo by the author.

become one of the largest Hasidic movements in the world. As a graduate of Haredi and Lithuanian yeshivas in Ashdod and Jerusalem,<sup>19</sup> Pinto, who is also a tsadik, became one of the most important rabbis of the American Israeli community. His rabbinical “brand” was linked to circles in Ashdod and New York, where he established many connections with Israeli and American political, business, and sports celebrities, including members of the Kushner family.

After he moved to New York, Pinto expanded his Ashdod yeshiva into a larger institutional network called Shuva Israel, which includes a network of Jewish institutions, yeshivas, synagogues, and community institutions. In Manhattan, Pinto gained numerous followers among members of the business community, who saw him as a “spiritual guide who makes wise judgments about business and the modern world, ... advises them, endows them with ‘energies,’ and serves as a ‘father figure,’ along with giving their actions significance.”<sup>20</sup> In the early stages of his residence in New York, Pinto mediated a multimillion-dollar business dispute between Charles Kushner, Jared’s father, and his brother Murray Kushner. Pinto was also known to have offered services to many followers in the fields of business, politics, and sports, including the American professional basketball player LeBron James,<sup>21</sup> former Republican Congressman Michael Grimm, Israeli business magnate Yitzhak Tshuva, American entrepreneur Jay Schottenstein, Israeli businessman Nochi Dankner, and former Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni.

The veneration of a person like Yoshiyahu Pinto as a tsadik is not unusual among Jewish spiritualist traditions. However, it is rare to see Moroccan Jews breaking away from their own orthodox tradition of tsadikim to adopt versions deriving from Ashkenazi Hasidism. In North Africa, the celebration of Jewish saints takes place around the shrine of the deceased, whose spiritual power survives death. The Hasidic tsadik is a living pious man who “leads the community of adherents which assembles around him. The tsadik communicates with God through mysticism and can perform various miracles.”<sup>22</sup> The tsadik bears the title *admor* (rabbi teacher), and charismatic authority is transferred from father to son over generations.

The relationship between Morocco and the Lubavitch movement began when Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson sent his first emissary, Rabbi Michael Lipsker, to expand the movement among Moroccan Jewish communities in the 1950s.<sup>23</sup> The late King Hassan II (1929–99) allowed the movement to continue its services by maintaining networks of religious, educational, and charitable institutions in Morocco. In 1990, the Moroccan ambassador to the United Nations

[151]

*A Moroccan  
Kabbalist*



Aomar  
Boum



was received by Schneerson, who prayed for Hassan II's health in recognition of his support for Lubavitch institutions in Morocco. Today, images of the Lubavitcher rebbe are widely circulated among Jewish communities in Morocco. Though they maintain many cultural aspects of Moroccan Judaism, Moroccan Jews have also been influenced by Chabad to adopt Hasidic hats (*borsalinos*) and long coats (*kapotot/kapotes*). Furthermore, Moroccan Jewish thought shares certain beliefs with Chabad, in particular the concept of the rebbe as a miracle worker. Pinto, however, illustrates a more complex transformation within some circles of Moroccan Jews over the last decades, largely due to their interaction with Hasidism and other Ashkenazi schools of thought.

The European Ashkenazi community in Israel and the United States accepted Pinto because he appropriated and combined European and North African Jewish traditions, merging them into a kind of North African Ashkenazi Orthodox Hasidic Judaism. The Chevrot Pinto study center in the Upper West Side has received an annual contribution of between \$10,000 and \$50,000 from the Kushner Family Foundation since 2004. The Marisa and Richard Stadtmauer Family Foundation, run by Jared Kushner's aunt and uncle, has also donated about \$529,000 to Pinto's institutions since 2009. These charitable connections highlight larger transformations and globalized networks underlying Jewish experiences in a secular world. The blending of Moroccan mystical beliefs, Hasidic rituals, and Lithuanian Orthodoxy has allowed Pinto's ministry to appeal to Jews in Israel and the United States.

According to Bilu, the interest in miracle-working rabbis among wealthy and politically minded Jews reflects a broad transformation among secular and religious people, who consult charismatic figures on personal issues. The casual visit and monetary donation to the rebbe provide people like Jared Kushner with an "instant redemption."<sup>24</sup> Equally important, Bilu contends, is the marketing of the rebbe as a miracle worker with supernatural powers, which are linked to a larger social and political anxiety in modern Israeli and American society, where politicians and business people "operate in a very stressful, unpredictable environment, and the whole society is in a permanent state of emergency."<sup>25</sup> At the same time, the broad support for Trump among Orthodox Jewish voters is widely linked to the powerful image of the strong leader and savior, which dominates Jewish communal belief. According to Yosef, my informant on Pinto, "Jews do not need to check if Trump's assertions are trustworthy or not, just like the rebbe's followers would never question his direct relationship



to God. It is a matter of faith.”<sup>26</sup> “How do you explain the support for Trump among Hasidic Jews?” I asked during a Skype exchange. With no hesitation, Yosef proceeded, “Trump has been blessed by our spiritual leaders. He might not be Jewish, but the fact that his daughter and her husband are Jewish is enough for us to trust that he will be surrounded with and blessed by the spiritual guidance of the rebbe.” Weeks after the election, I asked Yosef to explain the rise of antisemitic incidents within the United States. Yosef did not show any concern over anti-Jewish incidents, claiming that when bad people have tried to hurt Jews in the past, miracle workers have ended up defeating them. “If Trump could win over the most powerful established bureaucracies,” he stated, “the rebbe would not allow the powers of antisemitism to hurt Jews as well.”

In his work on saint reverence among the Jews of Aleppo in Jerusalem in the early 1960s, Walter Zenner argued that belief in what William James called “piecemeal supernaturalism,” according to which “the supernatural, or the divine, produces immediate effects in the natural world,”<sup>27</sup> among Hasidic and Sephardi Jews dominated Israelis’ image of non-European Jews; even secularized Sephardim were prone to piecemeal supernaturalism.<sup>28</sup> The fact that many believers felt embarrassment and skepticism about these religious traditions, Zenner concluded, indicated that Sephardi supernatural mysticism was in decline.

Support for Trump among Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews demonstrates the relevance of Jewish mysticism in the 2016 election. The election of Donald Trump was due in part to broad international support among Orthodox Jewish communities influenced by a growing body of spiritual leaders who can call on their followers to cast their votes for the politicians they believe promise a better financial and spiritual world. Our efforts to make sense of this phenomenon might usefully begin from a sense that people seek religious counseling to meet psychological needs in times of suffering and misfortune. The Kushner family’s reliance on Jewish charismatics and kabbalists like Pinto may be a manifestation of this Weberian salvation: Pinto is “believed to possess supernatural abilities, such as the power to bless, to work miracles, to observe the invisible, and to predict the future.”<sup>29</sup> The authoritative status and charismatic role of the tsadik is especially significant in times when people believe that the world is chaotic and in dire need of ordering.

During my conversations with many Moroccan Jewish followers and supporters of Pinto and Trump about the 2016 election, I was introduced to numerous examples of the mystical powers of David Pinto.

[153]

*A Moroccan  
Kabbalist*

●  
Aomar  
Boum

For instance, an informant named Moshe told me that Pinto played a key role in Ivanka Trump's marriage to Jared Kushner, after the couple struggled in the early years of their relationships. Ivanka maintained a close relationship with Pinto and adhered to Orthodox Jewish rules. In addition, during the early weeks of the general-election campaign, it was reported that Jared Kushner sought the advice of David Pinto in New York, as Donald Trump's campaign was struggling. Rabbi Pinto advised him to replace Corey Lewandowski as Trump's campaign manager; Lewandowski was fired and replaced by Kellyanne Conway.<sup>30</sup>

However, though many of Pinto's followers highlighted the Pinto-Kushner relationship, they were silent about a meeting between Hillary Clinton and Pinto that Pinto acknowledged in 2014. According to *Kooker*, a Haredi online newspaper, the former first lady had heard of Pinto and his miracles and paid a surprise visit to his home. Pinto described the encounter in his own words:

I stood up and paced around the room and thought surely I would bless her, but why did she really come to me for blessings, as a Jewish rabbi? I asked her: "How do you want the blessings, orally or in writing?" She replied: "both orally and written so I will be able to preserve the written blessing." I did so and said, "May you have high standing in the White House, and you shall love the [people] of Israel [i.e. the Jews] and protect them."<sup>31</sup>

In 2014, Yoshiyahu Pinto was convicted and sentenced to a year in prison for bribery. Yet neither his stature nor the stature of other Pinto-family rabbis in France, Israel, the United States, or Argentina have been significantly damaged. For many Hasidic Moroccan Orthodox Jews, Trump and Pinto are strong political and moral leaders, regardless of any political lapses. If anything, these lapses ensure greater fervor and counterinterpretation of facts among believers. Just as Trump promises miraculous solutions to a perceived broken and failing society, Pinto not only foresees these miracles but is believed to be a force that will make them happen.

As a child growing up in southeastern Morocco, I was taught like many other local children to believe in the power of saints to save individuals and communities. In the 1970s, there were at least six shrines just in my village; one of them was believed to be to a Jewish saint. As children, we were cautioned never to disturb the shrine or desecrate it for fear of being punished or inflicting damage on the community. My mother once told me that Jewish saints could intervene for the purpose of making the world a better place and protecting children

from disease and death. As my work on the Jews of southern Morocco has shown,<sup>32</sup> the power of saints is believed to be central to the protection and safety of local Jewish communities. This belief has remained an integral part of Moroccan Judaism today. One of the most poignant dimensions of the Pinto-Kushner-Clinton story is not only the globalization of Moroccan Jewish mysticism but also its growing connections to neoliberal capitalist networks and political establishments. The story of Pinto's family and its religious connections to Moroccan, Israeli, and now American politics highlights this globalization of a localized North African brand of Jewish mysticism from Essaouira to Ashdod and finally to New York.

[155]

*A Moroccan  
Kabbalist*

●  
Aomar  
Boum

## Notes

I would like to thank Sarah Sheckman, Kenneth Moss, Sarah Abrevaya Stein, Tony Michels, Susan Slyomovics, Daniel Schroeter, Thomas K. Park, Richard ElGrichi, David Suissa, Steve Maman, David Myers, Nathaniel Deutsch, Mohamed Daadaoui, and anonymous readers for their helpful comments.

- 1 Mordachai, personal communication, Oct. 16, 2016.
- 2 Times of Israel Staff, "Judaism's Greatest Mystical Text 'Predicts Trump Victory,' Israel GOP Head Reveals," *Times of Israel*, Nov. 2, 2016, accessed Mar. 6, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/mystical-zohar-predicts-trump-victory-israel-gop-head-reveals/>. See also David Sedley, "Israeli Kabbalists Split on USA Elections Victor," *Times of Israel*, Nov. 7, 2016, accessed Mar. 6, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-kabbalists-split-on-us-elections-victor/>.
- 3 Chaim Levinson, "A Rabbi Who Takes Care of the Needy—and Perhaps of Himself Too," *Haaretz*, June 8, 2012, accessed Mar. 6, 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/a-rabbi-who-takes-care-of-the-needy-8211-and-perhaps-of-himself-too.premium-1.435192>.
- 4 Josh Nathan-Kazis, "Charismatic Moroccan Kabbalist Draws Crowds and Questions," *Forward*, June 23, 2010, accessed Mar. 6, 2017, <http://forward.com/news/128944/charismatic-moroccan-kabbalist-draws-crowds-and-qu/>; Steve Fishman, "The Trials of the Kabbalah Capitalist," *New York*, July 30, 2014, accessed Mar. 6, 2017, <http://nymag.com/news/features/rabbi-yoshiyahu-yosef-pinto-2014-7/>; Marek Cejka and Roman Koran, *Rabbis of Our Times: Authorities of Judaism in the Religious and Political Ferment of Modern Times* (London, 2016), 201.

- 5 It is important to note here that Rabbi David Pinto and Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto represent two competing clans in the Pinto rabbinical dynasty today. Both rabbis disagree on numerous issues.
- 6 For a history of the Pinto family, see "The Pinto Family," *Ohr Haim Ve Moche* 11 (2017): 10–21.
- 7 Yosef, personal communication, Nov. 23, 2016.
- 8 William Neuman, "In a Democratic Stronghold of New York City: Trump Finds Support among Orthodox Jews," *New York Times*, Nov. 10, 2016, accessed Mar. 6, 2017, [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/11/nyregion/in-democratic-stronghold-of-new-york-city-trump-finds-support-among-orthodox-jews.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/11/nyregion/in-democratic-stronghold-of-new-york-city-trump-finds-support-among-orthodox-jews.html?_r=0).
- 9 Josh Nathan-Kazis, "Jared Kushner and the White-Haired Mystic Whose Dad 'Got a Ride' from a Dead Sage," *Forward*, Jan. 29, 2017, accessed Mar. 6, 2017, <http://forward.com/news/361035/jared-kushner-and-the-white-haired-mystic-whose-dad-got-a-ride-from-a-dead/>.
- 10 Harvey Goldberg, "The Zohar in Southern Morocco: A Study in the Ethnography of Texts," *History of Religions* 29 (1990): 233–58.
- 11 Yoram Bilu, "The Inner Limits of *Communitas*: A Covert Dimension of Pilgrimage Experience," *Ethos* 16, no. 3 (1988): 307; Victor Turner, "The Center out There: Pilgrim's Goal," *History of Religions* 12, no. 3 (1973): 220.
- 12 Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, *Judaisms: A Twenty-First-Century Introduction to Jews and Jewish identities* (Oakland, Calif., 2016), 109.
- 13 Deborah Bernstein, "Conflict and Protest in Israeli Society: The Case of the Black Panthers of Israel," *Youth and Society* 16, no. 2 (1984): 129–52.
- 14 Nathan Guttman, "Shas Sets up Shop in U.S.," *Forward*, Dec. 20, 2011, accessed Mar. 6, 2017, <http://forward.com/news/israel/147999/shas-sets-up-shop-in-us/>.
- 15 Aaron Willis, "The Shas—The Sephardic Torah Guardians: Religious 'Movement' and Political Power," in *The Elections in Israel, 1992*, ed. Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (Albany, N.Y., 1995), 121–40; Omar Kamil, "Rabbi Ovadia Yosef and His 'Culture War' in Israel," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 4, no. 4 (2000): 22–29.
- 16 Yoram Bilu and Eyal Ben-Ari, "The Making of Modern Saints: Manufactured Charisma and the Abu-Hatseiras of Israel," *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 4 (1992): 672–87.
- 17 Issachar Ben-Ami, *Saint Veneration among the Jews in Morocco* (Detroit, 1998).
- 18 Haya Bar-Itzhak and Aliza Shenhar, *Jewish Moroccan Folk Narratives from Israel* (Detroit, 1993), 157–63.
- 19 For a discussion of Pinto's rise, see André Levy "Hiloulah rabah ve-atseret teshuvah: Nituah mikre," in *Recherches sur la Culture des Juifs d'Afrique du Nord*, ed. I. Ben-Ami (Jerusalem, 1991), 167–79.
- 20 Yair Ettinger, "A Rabbi Not Afraid to Deviate," *Haaretz*, Mar. 29, 2010, accessed Mar. 6, 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/a-rabbi-not-afraid-to-deviate-1.265442>.

- 21 Marc Tracy, "Lebron Consults Shady Kabbalist Rabbi," *Tablet*, Aug. 10, 2010, accessed Mar. 6, 2017, <http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/42207/lebron-consults-shady-kabbalist-rabbi>.
- 22 Gil Daryn, "Moroccan Hassidism: The Chavrei Habakuk Community and Its Veneration of Saints," *Ethnology* 37, no. 4 (1998): 354; Ron Margolin, "New Models of the Sacred Leader and the Beginning of Hasidism," in *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz (Leiden, 2004), 377–92.
- 23 Ben Sales, "How the World's Longest-Running Chabad House Survives in Morocco," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, Nov. 10, 2015, accessed Mar. 6, 2017, <http://www.jta.org/2015/11/10/life-religion/how-the-worlds-longest-running-chabad-house-survives-in-morocco>; Sue Fishkoff, *The Rebbe's Army: Inside the World of Chabad Lubavitch* (New York, 2003), 15; Douglas Mitchell and Leonard Plotnicov, "The Lubavitch Movement: A Study in Contexts," *Urban Anthropology* 4, no. 4 (1975): 303–15; Jacques Gutwirth, "Hassidism in France Today: A Peculiar Case?," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 47, no. 1–2 (2005): 5–21.
- 24 The Associated Press, "Rich and Famous Flock to Ashdod 'Miracle Worker' Rabbi," *Haaretz*, July 24, 2011, accessed Mar. 6, 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/rich-and-famous-flock-to-ashdod-miracle-worker-rabbi-1.374973>.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Yosef, personal communication, Nov. 23, 2016.
- 27 Walter P. Zenner, "Saints and Piecemeal Supernaturalism among the Jerusalem Sephardim," *Anthropological Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (1965): 201. See also William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York, 1958).
- 28 Ibid., 215.
- 29 Yael Keshet and Ido Liberman, "Seeking Empowerment and Spirituality in the Secular Age: Secular and Traditionalist Israelis Consulting Rabbis," *Sociology* 48, no. 1 (2014): 107.
- 30 Moshe, personal communication, Mar. 7, 2017.
- 31 "Mah 'astah Hilari Klinton etsel ha-Rav Pinto?," *Kooker*, Aug. 20, 2014, accessed Mar. 6, 2017, <http://www.kooker.co.il/>.
- 32 Aomar Boum, *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco* (Stanford, 2013).

[157]

A Moroccan  
Kabbalist



Aomar  
Boum

AOMAR BOUM is an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles and faculty fellow at the Université Internationale de Rabat (Morocco). He is interested in the place of religious minorities such as Jews, Baha'is, Shias, and Christians in post-independence nation states. He is the author of *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco* (2013). [aboum@anthro.ucla.edu](mailto:aboum@anthro.ucla.edu)